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## **TRADITIONAL GAMES AND PUPILS' VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION**

### ***Abstract:***

*The aim of this research was to examine the impact of using traditional games with the purpose of decreasing violent behavior among pupils in elementary schools as well as improving their mutual relationships. The research was conducted among second-, third- and fourth-graders in elementary schools in Karlovac (a total of 232 pupils). In order to get pupils' opinion on the subject, a questionnaire was designed for the needs of this research. It was based on the Questionnaire of School Violence (QSV 2003) of the Child Protection Center of Zagreb. Various traditional games were practiced during the period of eight weeks; pupils were learning and applying them. The final survey was carried out afterwards. Based on the results obtained, the impact of using traditional games with the purpose of decreasing violent behavior was confirmed. Mutual relationships among pupils improved, children started spending more time together, even after school, while the number of all types of violent behavior, both experienced and committed, was reduced. The results of this research indicate that traditional games could be a quality and efficient model for preventing violent behavior among pupils in elementary education.*

***Key words:*** CHILDREN'S TRADITIONAL GAMES, ELEMENTARY EDUCATION, EXPERIENCED AND COMMITTED VIOLENT BEHAVIOR, VIOLENCE PREVENTION AMONG CHILDREN.

### ***1. Introduction***

Traditional games are associated with country life, being part of the childhood experience of living in the country, and are – due to poverty and living conditions – simple, and rarely involve aids. Kozhikj (1988) points out that traditional games are present in the memories of older generations, while some of them have remained to this day, resisting all changes. Traditional games are part of heritage and cultural tradition, but due to

contemporary living conditions, passing them on to the younger generations ceases with time.

Matokovikj (2003) states that the type of children's game and taking part in them was dictated by the seasons, the environment and the playground area. Children played in meadows, grazing fields and plains where cattle grazed, along rivers where they swam, in yards and on country roads. Singing and dancing, the children participated in customs connected to religious feasts.

In time, there were changes in the country life and accordingly many games perished. With the advance of technology, young shepherds disappeared, taking their interesting games with them. Traditional games in the country were mostly played outside, in the open, while the winter was reserved for indoor games and games in the snow (Pershikj-Kovakj, 2004).

Hamershak (2003) points out the importance of the work by Alice B. Gomme, who recorded over two hundred traditional games and analyzed them based on memories of older interviewees, as well as the dissertation by Dorothy Howard from 1938 on songs of US children.

Dealing with the issues of traditional games in Croatia, Duran (1995) links children's games from Slavonija with the games from remote places around the world. Bognar (1986), in his works, gives special attention to the game in education. The game is used as a method for classroom work. The role of the game in physical education is known, while it is also used in all the other subjects. Findak (1996) sees the game as the means in physical education which has an important educational function. The game has a specific goal in classroom work, connected to the classroom process, and is used to meet the educational and pedagogical tasks in teaching. Osman (2001) points out that the game is child's work, while different teaching activities can be linked to the game. Bezikj (1990) states activity, spontaneity, voluntariness, joy and fun as features of the game. The game also contains the element of surprise, it brings forth symbols into children's lives – it is preparation for life and work. The game is a social phenomenon and means for social upbringing, for the player plays with other players in continuous communication.

The game offers the possibility of preventative action in cases of violent behavior among children. Nowadays, violence among children is a daily issue giving rise to the need for designing quality preventative programs. The preventative programs through game have proven to be efficient, and this research confirmed the efficiency of traditional games as the model for prevention of violence.

## ***2. Empirical research***

### *2.1. Research Aim and Hypotheses*

The aim of the research is to analyze the impact of traditional games in reducing violent behavior and improving pupils' mutual relationships in elementary education.

Two hypotheses have been developed:

H1 - There are statistically significant differences in the frequency of certain forms of experienced violent behavior of pupils regarding their sex and chronological age prior to and after the implementation of traditional games.

H2 - There are statistically significant differences in the frequency of certain forms of committed violent behavior of pupils regarding their sex and chronological age prior to and after the implementation of traditional games.

## *2.2. Sample*

The research has been carried out among second-, third- and fourth-graders in the elementary schools Grabrik, Dubovac, Turanj and Dragojla Jarnevikj from Karlovac (Republic of Croatia). The total number of respondents is 232 pupils of town schools, out of which 124 are boys and 108 are girls. Out of this number, 72 pupils are second-graders, 82 are third-graders and 78 are fourth-graders in elementary school. Two surveys have been made, while a total of 464 questionnaires have been analyzed.

## *2.3. Research Instruments*

In the initial research, Questionnaire I was used, designed for the purpose of this research according to the School Violence Questionnaire 2003 (UŠN-2003) by Buljan Flander, Karlovikj and Shtimac (2003) of the Child Protection Center of Zagreb.

The questionnaire encompasses basic data on the child (grade, school and sex), the feeling of being accepted/rejected in the class, the quality of interaction with other pupils, the frequency of hanging out with others, the number of friends in the class, the frequency of experiencing certain forms of violence, sex and number of violence perpetrators, as well as the solution to the issue of violence among school children. All questions within the questionnaire refer to the school year in full.

For the final survey, Questionnaire II was used, while the questions refer to the period during which the pupils played traditional games (two months).

## *2.4. Research Procedure*

Between 12 April and 16 April 2010, the initial survey was conducted among the pupils in four schools in Karlovac. The data on peer violence among pupils was thus collected.

Following the survey, the rules to traditional games were adopted within the framework of regular classroom activities. The period of learning the games took five weeks (from 19 April to 21 May 2010) because ten traditional games were introduced into the classroom – two games per week. The pupils adopted the game rules during Physical Education classes and during class meetings. During one class hour only one game was introduced; the teacher explaining the rules of the game and subsequently observing the play. Pupils in clusters simultaneously played a single game in the area planned for playing activities (gym, classroom or school yard).

After the adoption of the rules of the game during class, the game was played. The period of playing the games learned took three weeks (from 24 May to 11 June 2010), during the period for spontaneous play during school breaks. The children played the game on breaks, before and after classes or when the teacher planned the game within a subject. Each play was recorded on the poster in the classroom under the title “Our Classroom Games” or something similar. The process of playing also included other activities that were thematically connected to the game, aiming at motivating the pupils to play the traditional games (speaking and writing exercises, art workshops, game research, competitions, etc.).

Each week, during the research period, meetings among teachers participating in the project were held. Eighteen primary teachers, who taught the pupils in their classes ten traditional games, were included in the project.

The overall playing process took eight weeks. Between 11 June and 16 June 2010, the final survey of the pupils was made.

### 3. Research results and discussion

#### 3.1. Experienced Violent Behavior

Research results have shown the presence of individual forms of violent behavior among pupils from second to fourth grade in elementary school, but the application of traditional games has significantly reduced the frequency of violent behavior among pupils.

Table 1. *The frequency of individual forms of experienced violent behavior before and after playing traditional games*

Violent behaviour type	Situation	Never	Sometimes	Often	Total
Insults	before trad. games	124	98	10	232
	after trad. games	169	50	13	232
Threats	before trad. games	184	41	7	232
	after trad. games	202	28	2	232
Gossip	before trad. games	131	77	24	232
	after trad. games	164	57	11	232
Hitting and shoving	before trad. games	151	65	16	232
	after trad. games	188	38	6	232
Heavy fights	before trad. games	221	9	2	232
	after trad. games	230	1	1	232
Exclusion from common games	before trad. games	154	61	17	232
	after trad. games	182	43	7	232

Stealing and destroying things	before trad. games	177	47	8	232
	after trad. games	210	20	2	232
Total (absolute)	before trad. games	1142	398	84	1624
	after trad. games	1345	237	42	1624
Total (relative)	before trad. games	70%	25%	5%	100%
	after trad. games	83%	14%	3%	100%

The research results have shown that the average rate of frequently experienced violent behavior among pupils of lower grades is not high and varies within the range of 5% before the implementation of traditional games and 3% following their implementation.

The percentage of pupils experiencing occasional violent behavior is higher and varies between 25% before traditional games and 14% following the implementation of traditional games. After the implementation of traditional games, violent behavior was reduced and traditional games can be considered to be the cause.

The most severe forms of violent behavior (heavy fights) are the least represented forms of experienced violent behavior while more frequent forms of violence are the following: insults, gossip and exclusion from common play. Pupils resort to verbal violence, which is not to be neglected, and due efforts should be made to prevent it.

The rate of experienced violent behavior, following the implementation of traditional games, has been significantly reduced: from 30% of frequent and occasional experience of violence before traditional games, to 17% following the implementation of traditional games, which indicates the efficiency of traditional games in preventing violent behavior.

Table 2. *The frequency of repeated and occasional experience of forms of violent behavior before and after playing traditional games*

Repeated and occasional experience of forms of violent behaviour	Before traditional games	After traditional games
Insults	46%	27%
Threats	21%	13%
Gossip	44%	29%
Hitting and shoving	35%	19%
Exclusion from common games	34%	22%
Stealing and destroying things	24%	9%
Heavy fights	5%	1%
TOTAL	100%	100%

Research results have shown a decrease in the frequency of all forms of experienced violent behavior after the implementation of traditional games. The most frequent forms of violence are verbal: insults and gossip, while their frequency has significantly been reduced after the implementation of traditional games.

Table 3. *Comparison of the average number of frequently experienced forms of violent behavior according to sex and age using the t-test for dependent samples*

Sample	N <sub>1</sub> N <sub>2</sub> N <sub>3</sub>	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Correlation coefficient	p
Before traditional games	232	2.08	1.876		
After traditional games	232	1.20	1.534	0.475**	<0.001***
Boys before traditional games	124	2.18	2.012		
Boys after traditional games	124	1.17	1.632	0.498**	<0.001***
Girls before traditional games	108	1.96	1.707		
Girls after traditional games	108	1.24	1.420	0.443**	<0.001***
Second graders before traditional games	72	1.54	1.583		
Third graders before traditional games	82	2.01	1.940		0.001***
Fourth graders before traditional games	78	2.64	1.920		
Second graders after traditional games	72	1.07	1.466		
Third graders after traditional games	82	1.33	1.540		0.577
Fourth graders after traditional games	78	1.09	1.596		

Remark: \* statistical significance of up to 5%; \*\* statistical significance of up to 1%; \*\*\* statistical significance of up to 0.1%.

Based on the results obtained, the following can be concluded:

1. There is a statistically significant difference between the average number of experienced forms of violent behavior before traditional games (2.08) and the average number of experienced forms of violent behavior after traditional games (1.20). The difference is statistically significant at the level of 0.1% of significance ( $p < 0.001$ ). After traditional games, pupils experienced statistically significantly less forms of violent behavior.
2. There is a statistically significant difference between the average number of experienced forms of violent behavior before traditional games in case of boys (2.18) and the average number of experienced forms of violent behavior after traditional games in case of boys (1.17). The difference is statistically significant at the level of 0.1% of significance ( $p < 0.001$ ). After traditional games, boys have experienced statistically significantly less forms of violence.
3. There is a statistically significant difference between the average number of experienced forms of violent behavior before traditional games in case of

- girls (1.96) and the average number of experienced forms of violent behavior after traditional games in case of girls (1.24). The difference is statistically significant at the level of 0.1% of significance ( $p < 0.001$ ). After traditional games, girls have experienced statistically significantly less forms of violence.
4. The average number of experienced forms of violent behavior before traditional games in case of second-graders is 1.54, in case of third-graders 2.01 and 2.64 types in case of fourth-graders. Between these three arithmetic means, the difference is statistically significant at the level of 0.1% of significance ( $p = 0.001$ ).
  5. The average number of experienced forms of violent behavior after traditional games in the case of second-graders is 1.07, in case of third-graders it is 1.33 and 1.09 forms in case of fourth-graders. Between these three arithmetic means, the difference is not statistically significant ( $p = 0.577$ ).

From the above results it is possible to conclude that the hypothesis H1 can be accepted in general, which assumes the existence of statistically significant differences in the frequency of individual forms of pupils' experienced violent behavior according to sex and chronological age, before and after the implementation of traditional games.

### 3.2. *Committed Violent Behavior*

With respect to the sex of pupils who committed violence, research results have shown the following:

1. Most frequent perpetrators are individual boys (223 forms of violence before and 134 forms of violence after the implementation of traditional games).
2. Individual boys as perpetrators of violence are followed by groups of boys (161 forms of violence before traditional games and 73 forms of violence after the implementation of the games).
3. Girls have committed a higher number of violent acts in groups (57 forms of violence before and 35 forms of violence after the implementation of traditional games).
4. Individual girls have committed the least number of violence forms (42 cases of violence before and 39 cases of violence after the implementation of traditional games).
5. Girls most often participate in gossiping, while boys more often do insults, threats, hitting and shoving, stealing and destroying things and heavy fights.

On the one hand, before the implementation of traditional games, 23% of pupils committed some forms of violence, while after traditional games the case was the same for 14% of them. On the other hand, before the implementation of traditional games, 77% of pupils did not commit violence i.e. as many as 86% did not commit violence after the implementation of traditional games. It can be stated that after the implementation of traditional games a decrease in committed violent behavior is visible.

Based on the results obtained, the following can be concluded:

1. There is a statistically significant difference between the average number of committed forms of violent behavior before (1.64) and the average number of committed forms of violent behavior after traditional games (0.99). The difference is statistically significant at the level of 0.1% of significance ( $p < 0.001$ ).
2. There is a statistically significant difference between the average number of committed forms of violent behavior before the implementation of traditional games in case of boys (2.04) and the average number of committed forms of violent behavior after traditional games in case of boys (1.23). The difference is statistically significant at the level of 0.1% of significance ( $p < 0.001$ ). After the implementation of traditional games, boys have committed statistically significantly less forms of violence.
3. There is a statistically significant difference between the average number of committed forms of violent behavior before the implementation of traditional games in case of girls (1.18) and the average number of committed forms of violent behavior after traditional games in case of girls (0.71). The difference is statistically significant at the level of 0.1% of significance ( $p < 0.001$ ). After the implementation of traditional games, girls have committed statistically less forms of violence.
4. The average number of committed forms of violent behavior before the implementation of traditional games in case of second-graders is 0.85, in case of third-graders 1.83, and 2.17 forms in case of fourth-graders. Between these three arithmetic means, the difference is statistically significant at the level of 0.1% of significance ( $p = 0.001$ ). Before the implementation of traditional games, older pupils have committed in average more violence than younger pupils.
5. The average number of committed forms of violent behavior after traditional games in case of second-graders is 0.40, in case of third-graders 1.04, and 1.47 forms in case of fourth-graders. Between these three arithmetic means, the difference is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) at the level of significance of 0.1%. After the implementation of traditional games, older pupils have committed on average more violence than younger pupils.

From the results above it is possible to conclude that the H2 hypothesis can be accepted in general, which assumes the existence of statistically significant differences in the frequency of individual forms of committed violent behavior by pupils according to sex and chronological age before and after the implementation of traditional games.

The analysis of the research results has confirmed that all the implemented traditional games are very popular among pupils and have been ranked high. The average is 4.30, while the averages for individual games are: London Bridge is Falling Down (4.58), Please Mr. Crocodile (4.47), Mr. Blind Man (4.38), Grandma's Footsteps (4.32), Duck,



Duck, Goose (4.32), Tic-Tac-Toe (4.32), What's the Time, Mr. Wolf? (4.24), Wordplay (4.21), Children Go Home (4.18), Children's Circle Game (4.01).

#### ***4. Conclusion***

The research results have shown that the total of 30% of pupils of lower grades in elementary school is often or occasionally exposed to violence. Application of traditional games in the classroom resulted in a decrease of violence among children and the frequency of experienced violent behavior after the implementation of traditional games is 17%. After the implementation of traditional games, committed violent behavior has also decreased (23% of pupils committed violence before the games and 14% after traditional games). Thus the number of perpetrators and victims of violence is decreased.

It has been confirmed that traditional games are well accepted by children so these can be used as motivation in classroom. Traditional games can be utilized within the framework of all subjects in school and as an extracurricular activity, through which pupils would explore the tradition and customs of their area.

Application of traditional games enables children to adopt social skills through play activities, as well as to learn non-violent resolution of conflicts and taking a stand for oneself. The pedagogical effect of traditional games lasts beyond the time spent in the classroom and affects the pupils' free time and their relationships. Through play, the child develops their physical and psychological abilities, builds self-confidence, and creates a positive image of oneself – establishes them self as an individual. Such games offer the possibility to establish better relations within a certain group of children and can be used within the framework of preventive programs.

“By applying the national traditional games in the classroom, we encourage the research approach to work, while by correlating and integrating curriculum contents we connect the past and the present. National traditional games encourage children to preserve the national cultural heritage” (Bebek, 2005: 125). Traditional games are of cultural value and are part of tradition that should be cherished and preserved from oblivion.

According to the results of this research, prevention of violent behavior by application of traditional games is one of the efficient models for preventing violent behavior in elementary education.

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## **ТРАДИЦИОНАЛНИ ИГРИ И НАСИЛНО ОДНЕСУВАЊЕ НА УЧЕНИЦИТЕ ВО ОСНОВНО ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ**

### ***Апстракт:***

*Целта на ова истражување беше да го разгледа влијанието на употребата на традиционални игри со намера да се намали насилното однесување помеѓу учениците во основно образование како и да се подобри нивниот меѓусебен однос. Истражувањето беше спроведено помеѓу ученици од второ, трето и четврто одделение во основните училишта во Карловац (вкупно 232 ученици). За да се дојде до мислењата на учениците во врска со темата, беше изработен прашалник за потребите на ова истражување. Тој беше базиран врз Прашалникот за училишно насилство (ПУН 2003) на Центарот на заштита на ученици во Загреб. Во текот на осум недели беа практикувани разновидни традиционални игри, а учениците ги учеа и ги применуваа. Потоа беше изведена последната анкета. Врз база на добиените резултати, беше потврдено дека употребата на традиционални игри има влијание врз намалувањето на насилното однесување. Меѓусебниот однос помеѓу учениците се подобрил, децата започнаа повеќе да се дружат, дури и по часовите, додека бројот на сите видови насилно однесување, и искусено и направено, беше намален. Резултатите на ова истражување покажуваат дека традиционалните игри можат да претставуваат квалитетен и ефикасен модел за спречување на насилното однесување помеѓу учениците во основно образование.*

***Клучни зборови:* ДЕТСКИ ТРАДИЦИОНАЛНИ ИГРИ, ОСНОВНО ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ, ИСКУСЕНО И НАПРАВЕНО НАСИЛНО ОДНЕСУВАЊЕ, СПРЕЧУВАЊЕ НА НАСИЛСТВОТО ПОМЕЃУ ДЕЦА.**